

# Listen

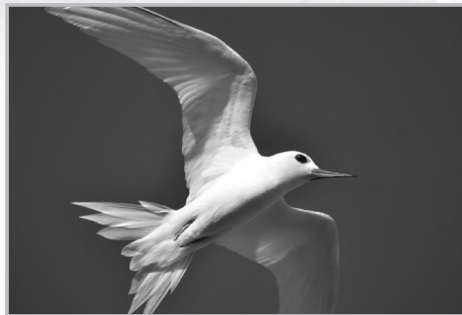
## A Seeker's Resource for Spiritual Direction

A P R I L 2 0 1 3

V O L 7 : I S S U E 2

### GRAVITY

"The same dynamics that created the galaxies created the stars and the oceans. The powers that build the universe are ultimately mysterious, issuing forth from and operating out of mystery. They are the most awesome and numinous reality in the universe. Humans are these dynamics, brought into self-awareness, becoming now fully aware of our creative work." — Brian Swimme



White tern — *Gygis alba*

Yesterday, while seated on a metal folding chair, I continued to allow the word *gravity* to have its way with me—as a writer this often happens: a word bites into my mind, and I wrestle with its meaning and significance for hours, days, or even months. An oil painting of a horse hung on the white wall, above my right shoulder. In the room, collective bargaining between teacher and support staff unions and a school district were transpiring. The negotiation table exchange was heated. Thirteen months had passed in this process. Mediation and advisory arbitration had taken place. I've been present through all of it.

I am grateful for the decades of contemplative practices that unintentionally trained me and continue to provide me the skills to be present, listen to a person or issue, and in my work as a communications specialist for a school district, craft a compassionate, accurate message for the public who are concerned with issues of grave importance and shared humanity.

Polarization cuts deep and can fracture relationships. Sitting beneath that horse painting, I practiced deep, rhythmic, breathing. Still thinking of *gravity*, I witnessed a contemptible verbal exchange transpiring several feet from me. Suddenly, without premeditation, I stood up, placed my notepad and pen on my chair, and found myself walking calmly toward the open door, out of the room, ignoring the watching eyes from others who rimmed the room, and like me, were seated against the wall. The exchange at the table continued, uninterrupted.

Step by step down the empty hallway, I wondered at the *gravity* that keeps me or you seated in place, until the dynamic convergence of mind, heart, and soul can no longer tolerate what is occurring. I deliberated the *gravity* of the contract being negotiated, and the *gravity* of a need for education, for all people.

I recall the words of Christina Baldwin, a storyteller, "It is a strange thing about life with gravity; we cannot leap without pushing off from something

solid." The *gravity* within me that resonates with respect, humanity, and collaboration had taken precedence in that moment with a full body response. After several minutes, I would reenter the room, calmly take my seat. Nearly nine more hours of negotiation, caucus, and new offers would take place. The hope for a settlement would not be reached.

I arrived home late that night, and turned to the sky, giving thanks to the energy of the universe which renews me and you, providing *gravity* to keep us in time and place. Later, I know my spiritual guide will listen carefully to my story, and in the listening, together we will comprehend *gravity*—speaking, teaching, and leading. And when tears form, pricking my eyes due to the chaos in our world, *gravity* will slide them down my cheeks, to the sturdy earth. 🍃

—Pegge Erkeneff

#### SEEDS OF INTEREST:

- 🍃 Field Guide: *Noticing the Conversation in Our Hearts*
- 🍃 Poem: *Listen*
- 🍃 Book Review: *My Soul Feels Lean: Poems of Loss and Restoration*
- 🍃 Global Resources
- 🍃 Poem: *Prayer of Silence*
- 🍃 Ask Owl



Imaginal Trackers Institute and River Rock Studio present:

## Ways of Seeing

*My soul can find no staircase to heaven  
unless it be through earth's loveliness.  
-Michelangelo-*

The natural world is our best teacher, guide, and healer. When we look and listen with our hearts, nature's ancestral energy bursts forth in living colours, mirroring itself in us.

During this week of sumptuous solitude situated in the foothills of the Canadian Rockies we will explore our inner and outer nature. Through sacred play, as taught by the animals, and through ancestral forms of art making, we will experience new ways of seeing and be transformed at the threshold of Nature's longing.

Absolutely no previous art experience required! Excellent for spiritual directors, pastoral counselors, therapists, educators and artists.

**Date:** July 29-Aug. 2, 2013

**Location:** River Rock Studio  
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**Facilitators:**

Madeline Rugh, PhD ATR-BC  
Straja Linder King, MA ATR-BC

**Contact:**

Ursula Reynolds @ 403-932-1351  
reynolds@riverrockstudio.com  
Madeline Rugh - mrugh@cox.net  
www.strawberrymooncounselling.com



**All in the Flow:**  
**The enneagram's gift to prayerfulness**

a PDF e-version  
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This beautiful presentation of the enneagram by Australian spiritual director and spirituality writer Patrick Oliver takes as its inspiration the entreaty of St Clare of Assisi to "gaze upon the cross". "All in the Flow" doesn't approach the enneagram clinically or psychologically, but lets it be a way for us to become prayerfully aware of grace already present within us and around us.

To purchase by a PDF e-version of "All in the Flow: the enneagram's gift to prayerfulness", simply contact Patrick by email requesting a copy. Once he receives your email, he'll send you an invoice through which you can pay by credit card. The three PDF documents which comprise "All in the Flow" will then be emailed to you. Patrick's address is [patrickoliver01@gmail.com](mailto:patrickoliver01@gmail.com). His website is [www.patrickoliver.net.au](http://www.patrickoliver.net.au).



spiritual directors international

# FUNDRAISING ACADEMY

Monday, July 1, 2013  
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INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION | [WWW.SDIWORLD.ORG](http://WWW.SDIWORLD.ORG)



# FIELD GUIDE

## NOTICING THE CONVERSATION IN OUR HEARTS

**"T**hough we live much of our lives outside, in action and engagement with the world, the deeper impact of what happens is registered in the narrative of the heart. Because the heart dwells in unattended dark, we often forget its sublime sensitivity to everything that is happening to us. Without our ever noticing, the heart absorbs the joy of things and also their pain and care. Within us, therefore, a burdening can accrue. For this reason it is wise now and again to tune in to your heart and listen for what it carries."

— John O'Donohue, *To Bless the Space Between Us*

When is the last time you *tuned in to your heart and listened for what it carries*? The more we practice listening to the conversation in our own hearts, the better prepared we are to tune in to others' hearts and listen for what their hearts carry. Moreover, being still, getting quiet and listening within increases our attunement to the voice that dwells deep in our hearts. An array of faith traditions emphasizes the fundamental role of this inner sanctum. Hindu yogis refer to this interior place where the sacred dwells as *guhā*—the cave of the heart. The cave of the heart is a place deep within each of us known only to God. When we enter this cave in the depth of our hearts through various forms of prayer and meditation,

we encounter the transcendent Mystery revealed in all of creation. This is not to suggest that the transcendent Mystery can be contained in our hearts; rather, this ineffable Mystery revealed in all of creation makes itself known in our hearts.

When we take time on a regular, preferably daily, basis to enter the cave of our heart and listen, we increase the likelihood that we will maintain awareness of the divine presence within our hearts in the midst of daily activities. As we become more mindful of the conversation in our own hearts—our joys, griefs, hopes and concerns—we are more likely to speak the truth of our heart and to listen for the voice of the true self yearning to be revealed in another's heart.

### REFLECT: LISTENING TO THE CONVERSATION IN YOUR HEART

Over the course of the next day or week, take time to enter the cave of your heart and listen. You may find it helpful to experiment with one or more of the following approaches as catalysts for evoking this inner conversation.

- Go for a walk or sit quietly in a natural setting
- Draw or paint a picture that captures the image(s) in your heart
- Play a favorite song, or watch one of your favorite movies, that speaks to your heart.

### PONDER: WHAT IS MY HEART YEARNING FOR IN THIS MOMENT? ●

—Diane M. Millis, PhD, is a spiritual director, inspirational speaker, and founder of the Journey Conversations Project based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA. This article is an excerpt from her book, *Conversation: The Sacred Art—Practicing Presence in an Age of Distraction* (Skylight Paths Publishing, [www.skylightpaths.com](http://www.skylightpaths.com), 2013.)

Listen

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WWW.SDIWORLD.ORG

*Listen* is an outreach publication of Spiritual Directors International. When you visit the SDI website at [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org), you can learn about retreats, programs, conferences, and other educational events related to spiritual companionship. You can read descriptions of the spiritual direction relationship from a variety of spiritual traditions,

and discover excellent questions to ask yourself and any potential spiritual directors you choose to interview. To locate a spiritual director or guide, go online to *Seek and Find Guide: A Worldwide Resource of Available Spiritual Directors*. More than 5,000 spiritual directors are listed by geographical location at [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org).



# Listen

Listen.

It may not take as long as a blink.  
There is the small deep sound of things  
worthwhile  
rustling amongst the telephone lines  
the garbage trucks and ambulance sirens;

contrails across the sky scratch the lens of space  
they fade and melt like  
pain in birth and great joy—  
I know  
there is other pain  
(lasting as long as you want)  
even though you believe it is beyond your control  
it is one of the things  
firmly in your control;  
choose then to listen-  
the quiet offer  
of inner peace  
regardless of the world  
and its worst.  
Inside there is a forest  
and vast mountains  
surrounded by oceans deep with healing,  
Just listen.

— Leslie Aguillard [Colorado, USA]

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## GLOBAL RESOURCES : Supporting Your Spiritual Journey

**April 11 – 18, 2013**

**St. Paul, Minnesota, USA**

Everyone is welcome to participate in Cultivating Compassion on the River, a Spiritual Directors International series of educational events including a conference with keynote Joyce Rupp, OSM, spiritual director John Pollard, and dozens of workshops, institutes, pilgrimage, and a contemplative retreat to help you cultivate compassion in yourself and your communities. Registration at [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org)

**May 21, 2013; August 20, 2013**

**"How to Seek and Find a Spiritual Director"**

FREE one hour SDI teleconference

12:00 EST; 5:00 GMT/UTC

Details and RSVP at [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org)

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contributed income (donations)?

This engaging, interactive day of learning will reshape your perceptions about asking others to align with you and say, "Yes!"

[www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org)

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contemplative, multi-faith learning community called Spiritual Directors International. For more than twenty years, SDI has been committed to compassionate listening around the world and across traditions. Everyone who cares about spiritual companionship is invited to become a member of Spiritual Directors International, a charitable nonprofit serving seekers and the educational needs of people who offer spiritual companionship. [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org)

● Connect on Facebook: *Spiritual Directors International for spiritual care.*

● Order a FREE subscription to *Listen: A Seeker's Resource for Spiritual Direction.*  
Go to: [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org)



# BOOK REVIEW


***My Soul Feels Lean: Poems of Loss and Restoration* | by Joyce Rupp**  
Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Press, 2013 | 176 pages, CAD\$15.85, GBPE£9.99, USD\$15.95

A collection of one-hundred-and-six poems, plus an introductory poem, *My Soul*, Joyce Rupp, author of artful prayers, retreats, and dozens of books offers a new treat to readers. Deeply personal and revealing, this meditative collection offers a glimpse into the heart and mind of Rupp's own journey of more than six decades. In *My Soul Feels Lean: Poems of Loss and Restoration*, Rupp shares fifty-three poems in the first half of the book, "Loss," and an additional fifty-three in "Restoration." The whole volume feels like a prayer of sorts; each poem conveys seeking, wrestling, introspection, insight, and compassion.

Rupp explains, "My soul's leanness comes about through various sources of impermanence, many of them not of my preference or decision, such as the death of dear ones, changes in my physical demeanor, penetrating questions regarding my cherished beliefs, and upsets in human relationships. I did not want to have someone or something leave me without my choosing" (5). Indeed, the poems reveal a mature awareness and convey the lean angst and grief of loss. Rupp writes, "Experience has taught me that when life brings loss, I can either

receive this situation openly or else clumsily trip over it by my resistant response. If I refuse to let go, my personal growth slows down. If I yield to the change being asked of me, grief-like emotions may still result, but their shape and quality will not be as severe because less energy is spent on revisiting the change" (5).

Poems of loss include lines such as this in *Refusal*: "You finally realize / you cannot force-feed her. / You cannot shove your experience / into someone else, no matter / how much you care" (20).

Poems of restoration invite acceptance and trust. Rupp writes, "Restoration and revitalization of some form follows our time of loss if we allow ourselves to engage in the required letting go. We won't be able to reestablish what we once had but we will receive some new seed of growth to take us further on the road of personal transformation" (85). Weaving images of nature or ordinary daily activity into poetry, she writes in *On My Way From Mankato to St. Paul*, "The crust on my preoccupied heart / fell off / quite unexpectedly / while driving on an almost empty interstate" (115). This collection will be helpful to everyone who experiences loss, desires renewal, and understands our shared humanity. Rupp's voice is vulnerable and authentic, providing a path of permission for the reader to experience his or her own expression of emotion. 

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ways of thinking and being. -2011 Grad*



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## Poem Prayer of Silence

I can come close. The quiet roaring like a wind  
Blows in my mind. Then, I, observing it begin  
To think of how it is, and crash. As if I sinned,  
Shame rises up to fill me, silence at an end.  
My thoughts race on to what I've done and have not done.  
Lost in this thick stupor of culpability  
My heart gets entangled in struggles lost or won  
Encircled by the noise of my mortality.

I start again. Let go, I've heard; and listen hard;  
A word may come curtailing the cacophony,  
Drawing God's purpose and presence beneath my guard  
To empty out my grief. I cease the litany,  
Listen once again to stormy silence. A word,  
No more. Words begin to rise; which one? I question  
Seeking to learn, and soon am overcome. Absurd  
How hard it is to cease to be; such frustration.

As close as sleep, and yet as far away as death  
(Distant kept, at least, within our minds), quietness  
Is not a gift we easily receive. A breath  
Away, still just past the reach of our relentless  
Thinking, doing, feeling, all that we call being.  
So, drawn to dying now, I quiver with a fear  
But also a familiar hope. And now seeing  
End to me, in the emptiness, I find God near.

Peter W. Wenner [Massachusetts, USA]




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# ASK OWL



**Q**uestion: I'm seeking a spiritual guide or director, and I noticed on the Spiritual Directors International website that I should *interview* at least two or three people. Shouldn't a

spiritual guide interview me? Why would I want to talk to a few people?

**H**oot Hoot: Thank you for your great question! First of all, the decision to find a spiritual director is rising in you, thus, you are the seeker initiating the relationship. When you imagine yourself interviewing someone, it is helpful to think in terms of a conversation, a time to ask questions, and dialogue. An initial interview will offer both of you time to assess and discern. Your relationship with your spiritual director or spiritual guide is a very important, confidential, and often a cherished, significant relationship. You and the person you ask to accompany you will want to prayerfully discern if meeting together will be a good match. So, the initial conversation or interview is important. Also, if after the interview you both determine that you will meet on an ongoing basis, it is a good practice to

mutually agree to assess the relationship every three to six months.

Why is it important to interview at least two or three people? Finding a spiritual director is a very personal and spiritual quest. Remember, God (or Ultimate Reality or a Higher Power) is the true spiritual guide. A spiritual director will companion you as you deepen your relationship with God. Conversing with at least two people will give you a sense of personality and style differences. You will want to talk about what draws you to spiritual guidance at this particular time in your life. Notice how comfortable, or uncomfortable you are speaking about faith, contemplative practices, your yearnings and beliefs. You will not share your spiritual story, current struggles or joys during this initial conversation. Ethically, a spiritual director will want to make sure you feel free to depart from the initial interview and have no regrets if you never speak again.

Please take reasonable steps to verify the competency of any potential spiritual director. Valuable questions to ask when you meet with a potential spiritual guide include:

- What enrichment, spiritual formation, and theological education do you have in spiritual direction?
- What is your personal experience tending your own prayer, meditation, and contemplative life?
- What is your experience as a spiritual director? How many years? In what environments? What are you most interested in spiritually?
- How do you continue your education and supervision for your spiritual direction ministry?
- What ethical guidelines do you abide by, such as those published by Spiritual Directors International? Have you ever been accused or convicted of misconduct?
- What type of engagement agreement will we establish to clarify roles and responsibilities in our spiritual direction relationship, such as samples provided to members of Spiritual Directors International?

Interviewing a potential spiritual director is a way to carefully listen to the way the spirit is guiding you in your selection process. Questions for your personal reflection as you seek a spiritual guide are posted on the Spiritual Directors International website, and a free "How to Seek and Find a Spiritual Director" teleconference is offered four times each year. Your spiritual director is your choice. 🦉

—If you have a question for Owl, please e-mail [Listen@sdiworld.org](mailto:Listen@sdiworld.org).



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“Tending the holy around the world and across traditions ...

Al servicio de lo sacro alrededor del mundo y a través de las tradiciones ...”

—Translated by Marta Rios and Xavier Ortiz Monasterio

WHEN YOU FINISH READING LISTEN, PASS IT ALONG TO SOMEONE WHO MAY ENJOY LEARNING ABOUT  
SPIRITUAL DIRECTION. AS A GLOBAL LEARNING COMMUNITY, SDI INVITES YOU TO HELP CULTIVATE COMPASSION.



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